The Builder.

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THE force of habit, dislike of change, and inability of men to invent, are strikingly shewn in architectural productions all over the world. The first rude habitations of a country, regulated by the materials at hand, the climate, the wants of the inhabitants, and the means at their disposal, or when obtained from another country, appear to have influenced all after productions. The original type is discoverable to the last; and, even where circumstances have led to the use of another material, or a change in the purpose of the structure, it has been, during a long period, but slightly departed from, and that by slow and almost imperceptible degrees. The buildings of the Chinese, to mention one country, afford a curious and striking illustration of the fact. The tents of their herdsmen-ancestors are to be seen in their houses, palaces, and pagodas of to-day; so much so, that their towns look like encampments; and Hope says, that when Lord Macartney, after crossing the whole of the Chinese empire, from south to north,—from Canton to the great wall, its furthest length,—was received by the emperor in a real tent, he scarcely perceived any difference between that and the thousands of stationary buildings he had viewed during his journey.

Egypt, India, Greece, Rome, would all afford corroboration of the remark if it were needed, although, perhaps, neither so much so as the extraordinary country before named, where progress seems forbidden, and expansion of mind is out of the question. "So far, but no farther," say there the rulers of the people in all things. If a Chinese does not acquire a certain amount of knowledge, he is deemed infamous, and loses certain rights; but if he pass the prescribed bounds, and gains more information than is legally necessary, he is looked upon as dangerous, and loses perhaps his life.

Oh! happy Englishmen, if we would but feel it so; to whose intellectual and moral advancement, no bounds are marked but those raised by our own ignorance, wilfulness, or weakness!

A few days ago we saw a very interesting representation of a Chinese house, made in that country. Immediately after the termination of the late war, Mr. Morson, of Southampton-row, sent to China for accurate drawings and descriptions of the principal druggist's shop in Canton. It was found difficult to obtain drawings which would clearly convey all that was desired, but not so to have a model made; and, accordingly, native artificers were employed to construct, in small, an exact counterpart of a shop and house complete; and this is now in Mr. Morson's possession, and supplies information as to the construction of Chinese dwellings, which was not to be obtained at "The Chinese Exhibition." The house is two stories in height, connected by a step-ladder; it has a room behind the shop, and two rooms on the upper floor, and is covered with an M roof, or roof of two spans from front to back. The upper room is lighted by a series of openings in the front wall, which have perforated wooden shutters. These openings also give light to part of the shop below, by means of a large trap in the upper floor. The upper back room is lighted by a narrow uncovered opening in the roof, at the junction of the two spans (the "valley"), extending the whole width of the house. A similar opening in the floor, protected by a light railing, as is the opening in the front room, gives light and air to the room below. The rudeness and wastefulness (in space) of this mode of lighting are too obvious to need remark. There are, moreover, two small openings on each side of the house to admit air. The frontage is about 20 feet, and the depth of the house about 24 feet.

The shop front is open to the street, but has wooden shutters to close it at night. The construction, even in this case, recalls in the mind of the observer the original type to which we have alluded, and will serve to take us back to the point whence the mention of this model has led us to digress,—the natural adherence of men to forms previously used, their love of precedent, and the deduction it was our purpose to make when we commenced these observations.

The deduction, an obvious one, but nevertheless little attended to, is this,—that nations who appreciate the influence of fine buildings and fine art generally on the character, and would advance in that direction, should keep a most jealous watch upon every public building that is about to be erected, with the view of preventing the increase of bad taste. Each building that is raised influences the appearance of many others; and one weakness or monstrosity begets a thousand. It is impossible to calculate the mischief which may be done to architecture as an art by even one building, or say how long its advance may be retarded by it. The extent to which a design affects the architecture of the time may be seen every day. Nothing is too ugly to be copied when once erected, and every repetition will play its part in further vitiating public taste, and preparing the way for worse.

To compare very small things and very trifling effects with large,—we may mention an exemplification under our eye at this moment. Two or three years ago, in the ordinary course of an every-day practice, we "beautified" with compo the front of an old house, up to that time rejoicing in the unadorned simplicity of brick; and one by one four neighbouring houses have since been made by their various owners to take precisely the same form, its defects, in particular, being scrupulously repeated.

We repeat what we have already said, that the art-loving portion of the public should watch most jealously the erection of every public building, and insist upon having the most satisfactory assurance that what is about to be done will be creditable to the nation, before they suffer the public money to be expended.

BRITISH EMBASSY IN TURKEY BURNT.—The Constantinopolitan correspondent of the *Daily News* reports that the British Embassy at Pera, in Turkey, is a total wreck, together with no less than ninety houses adjoining it and each other, from fire, originating in a house next to the residence of the *attachés* of the embassy. The terror, as usual in such wooden and combustible food for flames as those consumed, was extreme and universal, being by no means confined to the neighbourhood suffering under the infliction. The embassy itself, however, was of stone, with iron shutters and doors, and so far withstood the flames but the furniture, window woodwork, &c., were destroyed. The Italian theatre, too, and some of the best houses in Pera, are involved in the ruin.

THE PROFESSION OF THE ARCHITECT CONSIDERED:

ITS OBJECTS, MODE OF OPERATION, AND OBSTACLES.

THE profession of the architect, and its position, generally, in the world, have afforded matter for comment in our pages on several occasions. We have endeavoured to call the attention of our brethren to the unsatisfactory position of many departments of the art and profession, in the hope that the vague complaints, many of which have found utterance in the letters of correspondents, might be so far analyzed as to induce an accurate conception of the present state of architectural practice, and some determined effort to place architecture in its proper position, as an art, as a science, as a means of success in life, and as a power, capable of conducing to the highest amount of mental gratification and improvement, of conferring benefits of the utmost influence upon general happiness and comfort, in the social state. It is extremely important to the welfare of the professors of architecture, that they should carefully consider the obstacles to which their peculiar profession is exposed, and clear away that opaque medium which seems to interfere between them and the notice of the public. Too often, the hurry of the daily struggle leaves little time for reflection on the means by which many difficulties might be removed, but we are sure, that greater impediments attend the progress of the architect than are ordinarily to be found in other professions, or than are to be classed amongst the difficulties, from which no man's lot is free. It is manifest, if this be the case, as we hope to be able to shew, that it is to the happiness and welfare, not only of architects, but of every member of the community, that these causes should be removed, that well-directed efforts should bring their expected reward to the individual; and not remain, as now, profitless to the public. It is painful in any case, to see the energies of a life wasted in incessant labour without result, when the mere indication of an aid would render the same exertions productive and beneficial; though the world will always supply instances of such circuitous and misapplied labour. But the case is pregnant with matter for deep reflection, when it is that of a whole profession, and one which has legitimate means of exercise, so eminently conducive to the public good.

To expose all the impediments, which beset the progress of architecture, and prevent its attaining its due rank as a study, an art a science, and a profession, to terminate the reproach, that it is "the only branch of human ingenuity which remains an exception to this century,"—words which have been extensively quoted from our pages,—is a task difficult enough for one pen, yet worthy the effort. We long since reminded our readers, that the "ostensible profession" of architecture did not form the "main pursuit," and that in the actual profession, "valuations, surveys, arbitrations, and other kinds of business less connected with the art" occupied a larger amount of the architect's attention than they might be required to do, did architects exert themselves to diffuse a general knowledge of the value of their time and labours, when employed in the higher branches of their profession. Besides the space we devoted to different features of the subject, other efforts have been made, though not precisely in the same road, and as we considered at the time, somewhat misdirected, however much we concurred in their main intended object. It is essential that the important and leading features of the case should be stated, and that no further errors or misconceptions should be added to those which at present exist to the detriment of architecture. It must be recollected, that we address the public, rather than a profession; and we know well how hard it is to eradicate any erroneous conclusions extensively circulated. A certain degree of infallibility will always be attached by the general public to what has come from the press; and it greatly behoves those who know they are dealing with the vital interests of an art and a profession, to weigh well what will be the translation made of any particular statement.

The impediments to the progress of architecture, exerted mainly through the medium of the practice of its professors, we say, have never yet been enumerated. Perhaps no individual has occupied himself much in tracing to their causes, the obstacles of which from time to time, he

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